A Touchstone or Tryall OF FAITH,

BY

The Originall from whence it springs, and the Root out of which it grows:

Held out

By way of EXPOSITION of the 12 and 13 verses of the first Chapter of *Iohn's* Gospel, and of the six former verses of the third Chapter, which treat expresly about this point:

Intended

Not for the disquiet of any, but for the eternall Rest and Peace of all, to whom the Lord shall please to make it usefull thereunto.

To which is added,

The Spirituall Practise of CHRISTIANS in the Primitive Times.

LONDON,

Printed for *Giles Calvert* at the Black Spread-Eagle at the West end of *Pauls*, 1648.

Whet			
9 Bowl of whit	0	6	0
1 Bowl of mixtr	0	6	2
3 Bushl of whet	0	9	6 0
2 Bowls of ots	0	4	5
2 Bowls of ots	0	5	0
9 Bowl of Mixtr	0	5	2
2 Bowls of ots	0	4	6 0
1 Bowl of ots	0	2	3
2 Bowls of ots	0	4	6 0
1 Bowl of mixtr	0	7	0
2 Bowls ots	0	5	3
1 Bushl mixtr	0	3	10
5 Bowls ots	0	12	0 6
2 Bowls ots	0	05	0 0
2 Bowls ots	0	05	0 0
4 Bowls ots	0	10	0 0
1 Bowl ots	0	02	0 6 0
3 Bushls whet	0	13	0 0
1 Bowl of mixtr	0	07	0 4
1 Bushl of whit	0	04	0 0
a half Bushl whit	0	02	0 0
1 Bushl of mixtr	0	03	0 6
1 Bushl of mixtr	0	30	0 4 0
1 Bowl ots	0	2	4
3 Bushel of mixtr	0	10	6 0
1 Bowl of whet	0	7	6
1 Bowl of [illegible] mixtr	0	7	0
1 Bowl of whet	0	7	10 0
29 Bowls ots	3	13	0 0
4 Bowls of whet	1	10	0 0
2 Bowls of mixtr	0	15	0 6

9

To the Reader.

READER,

IF thou haſt any leaſure from partaking in, or exclaming againſt the bitter contentions of this preſent age, which have eat out moſt mens content in themſelves, and their pleaſingneſſe to others; Here are ſome ſerious conſiderations propoſed to thee, as thou wilt one day acknowledge, when thine eyes come to be fully opened.

It is high time to look out after ſome other place and certainty of entertainment there, when this earth by its continuall ſhaking and cracking under us, doth ſo often threaten that it will not long ſupport us. There is no true ſecurity for us, but by Faith in Chriſt, he is the only Rock, and there is no ſtepping thither but by Faith: there is no certainty, but by an aſſured knowledge of the truth of this Faith; whereof there are ſo

many and such accurate cheats that it is not possible to discern the difference without thorough sifting and scanning. The Devill, that great cozoning merchant, hath all kinde of counterfeit wares which hee paints and guilds, that he may put off for true. He hath grosser ware for the grosser sort, whom he can content with any thing; but more refined stuffe for such as look more narrowly into things: Men that are openly vaine and prophane, yet can hardly bee beaten off from it, but that they love God, and have such a Faith as will carry them to heaven; though they doe not live so strictly as others, yet they believe in Christ, and that is it God looks after.

This deceit thou seest through oh stricter soule! but know withall, the Devill hath more curious counterfeits, wherein there is the exact proportion of the thing resembled, all but the life and power; yea, he is cunning also in imitating the life and power of every thing, he hath a resemblance of that too (for those that will not otherwise be content) to keep them from attaining the truth and substance which if they were not thus deceived by him, with the similitude of, they would not cease to pursue.

Thou art confident thou art not deceived, so are all that are deceived; the Devill could not deceive thee, with that which is false, if he did not withall work

in

in thee a perswasion that it is true: What will it hurt thee to try and try thoroughly? Nay, surely it will much advantage thy very confidence: After tryall, thou mayst be confident upon knowledge, now thou art confident but upon supposition; and if thou shouldest at last prove mistaken, thou wouldest have too much time to befoole thy selfe, and bewaile thy confidence; thou wilt be more angry that thou were pressed no further to tryall, then thou art now offended that thou art pressed so much to it. Thou art but a Traveller in this world, and yet thou wilt look after a sure title in these transitory things; oh look that there be not a flaw in thy title to thy true inheritance: And if thy spirit be seriously bent towards this employment, here perhaps the Lord may administer to thee some help and direction, or furnish thee better some other way when he shall see good.

The way of tryall here propounded, is certaine, though somewhat difficult, yea, indeed altogether impossible without the help of Gods Spirit: And yet, what sweeter, safer, truer direction can be given, to us poore, weak, empty creatures, who are nothing, who can doe nothing, then to fly to him who is able to do all things, to issue out that power to us, and manage it in us, whereby the thing we desire may be effected; and to waite quietly upon him in our present uncer-

thine condition till he shall please to do it, rather then patch up a satisfaction of our own?

And this way of tryall is not any invention of mine, but it is plainly represented in these Scriptures, from the mouth of John *and Christ, referring the tryall of Faith, to the birth, and of the birth to the Spirit, as thou mayst more fully see in the Discourse it selfe; to which I now leave thee to make what use of it, the Lord shall direct thee.*

Thine in what the Lord pleaseth,

Isaac Pennington.

A Touch-

A Touchstone or Tryall OF FAITH.

JOHN 1. VERS. 12. 13.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sonnes of God, even to them that believe on his Name;

which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

THis sweet and soaring Evangelist having glanced at the excellency of our Lord Christ, in his relation to God (being his Word) his presence, and oneness with God, *vers.* 1. in his influence upon all things, he gave them their being, *vers.* 3. he gave them their life too (for it was first in him) and his life containes all that light that man at any time receiveth, either naturall or spirituall, either from and through the creatures, in at the windowes of his own sence and reason; or more immediately from the Spirit of God, into his own spirit, *vers.* 4.

Having thus given a generall and pithy description of him, who

who was to be the maine subject of his discourse; he comes in the next place to speak of his fore-runner, and what of Christ might be learned from him.

He describeth this fore-runner: 1. By his mission, he was sent from God; hee did not goe of his owne head, but God did him goe: 2. By his name, *His name was John, verse.* 6. 3. By the end of his comming it was for to be a witnesse, to testifie somewhat from God unto the world: 4. Concerning what he was to witnesse; It was concerning that light he had spoken of, that came into the world and shined in the darknesse, uncomprehended by the darknesse, that this was the light indeed: 5. To what end he was to witnesse this, *that all through him might believe*; that by his meanes men might universally come to acknowledge this light, and to cast themselves upon it, to lead them unto life, *verse.* 7.

In *verse.* 8. he removes a mistake which might arise in men minds, concerning this end; *He was not that light, but to beare witnesse of that light*; as if hee had said, do not mistake, he was not this light himself, he came not to that end to be the light, but only to give in a testimony from God concerning the light; to tell men which was it, that men might not have recourse to him but to the light; he was to point with the finger at Christ, and to send men thither.

And hee gives a reason why *John* could not bee this light, *verse.* 9. because he wanted the property of this light: This light is the originall light as it was described before, who hath all light in him, who giveth out all light, who is the very light; *The true light that lightneth every man that commeth into the world*: It is he gives the light of reason to every man that comes into this outward world, it is he gives the light of the spirit to every man that enters by faith into the inner world. Now *John* was not this true light, this very light, but only had his candle lighted by it.

Verse. 10. The Evangelist proceeds further to describe this light: *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*: He did not only enlighten the world from the beginning of it, but at length he himself came into the world; and the world had a neere relation to him, for hee

gave

gave it its being, it was the workmanship of his hands, and yet the world knew him not; though he had not forgotten the world, but came in due time to look after it, yet the world had forgotten him and knew not who he was.

Yea, *he came to his owne, verse* 11. his own people the Iewes, whom he had selected out of the world; whom he had alwayes cherished, to whom hee had promised this comming of his, and who had long expected it, and yet they *received him not.*

All this seemeth to be the Answer of an Objection, such an Objection as this:

Object. If Christ was the light, what need he have such an one as *John* to goe and proclaime it? what need *John* come to beare witnesse of him? light discovers it selfe: The Sun needs none to goe and proclaime that there is light in it; If this were the fountaine of light, the very light indeed; what need hath he of *Iohn's* testimony, of *Iohn's* finger to point at him?

Answ. Yes, saith he, need enough, for though he was in the world; yea, and was the great Architect of the world, yet *the world knew him not*; and though he came to his own people, who had all the light of God that was in the world, yet they *received him not.* The world, they did not know him; the Iewes they would not own him; though they did partly know him, yet they did not like him. Surely, he who was thus unknown, who lay hid in the field of the world, to the world; who was thus rejected by his own, had great need of a witnesse, to declare to the world who he was, and to testifie to the stubborn Jewes, their rebellion against the light.

But then it may further be demanded, what did the Iewes loose by not receiving, or what should the world gaine by comming to this light, when they were pointed to it by *Iohn*?

Why very much, as *verse* the 12th holds out: *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sonnes of God*: They should gaine this great dignity to be the sons of God, comming into Union and Fellowship with him, they should partake of his honour from, and interest in the Father. Christ would give them this priviledge, to become the sonnes of the most High; to go and call him Father, and desire any fatherly

act of him; and if he be questioned for it, tell him Christ bid him doe so; hee gave him this right and priviledge, to bee a sonne: What meanes that? what is it to have a Father? what is it to be a sonne?

It includes these three things in it.

1. *Carefull education by the Father.*
2. *A sonlike spirit in himself from the Father.*
3. *A sonlike inheritance for himself with the Father.*

Each of these is included in this prerogative of being a sonne.

1. *Carefull education by the Father.* The Father is to nurture, and bring up his child, sutable to his own state and degree. This is an universall law of nature, and universally observed by every creature; every creature brings up, what it brings forth; and doubtlesse the substance of this law is written on God's heart, who hath written the image of it on every thing that comes from him. Now Education hath these three things in it.

First, Instruction in such literature, as becomes such a sonne: Thou maist goe to God, for such knowledge as becomes a sonne of God; thou art to bee brought up in the knowledge of the most High, this is thy right; *It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God; they shall all know me from the least to the greatest.* The least of them shall not want sutable knowledge; They shall all know God who is the greatest thing to be known, and whom it requires the highest life to know: *This is life eternall, to know thee the only true God.*

Secondly, Preservation from dangers. The Father is to provide Tutors and Governours to look to the child, that he doe not wrong himselfe, nor that any else wrong him; *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: All things shall work together for good to them that love God: The stones of the field shall be at peace with thee.* Creatures, men, devils, temtations, sins, corruption; nothing shall hurt them, nor they shall not hurt themselves; nothing can hurt them but departing from God, and their Father will look to

that

that too; *I will put my feare in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me*, Ier.32.40.

Thirdly, Proviſion of meat, drink, cloathes, recreations, and whatſoever elſe is needfull for him, ſutable to his degree: This God will take care for too, he will take care of this for the body, *Hee that feeds the Ravens, and cloathes the Lilies, ſhall he not much more feed and cloath you?* but it is their ſpirit he is ſpecially the Father of, that is his child, and ſpirituall meat, drink, cloathes, recreations, &c. hee will not faile to provide for it: *He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold*: The Lions may ſuffer hunger, and want food for their bodies; but none of his ſhall want food for their ſpirits; as he promiſeth the poore captive exile, who is baniſhed from his preſence and in captivity under Satan, bound in his pit; he promiſeth him that he ſhall not die there, nor his bread faile there, *Eſay* 51.14. The words in the Hebrew are in the future tenſe, *He ſhall not die in the Pit, and his bread ſhall not faile.*

2. *A ſonlike ſpirit*: It is naturall to the ſonne, to be like the father; but why? becauſe he hath it from his father. God alſo will put his Spirit into his Sonnes, *I will put my Spirit within you*; Indeed, it is the ſpirit of a ſon makes a ſonne; and therefore thoſe that want the ſpirit of ſonnes, we ſay they are unnaturall. God ſhould beget unnaturall children if he ſhould not endue them with a ſonlike Spirit: He could not be a true Father, beget a true child, unleſſe he begat his own ſpirit in him: There can be no life of a ſonne, no voyce of a ſonne, no motion of a ſonne without the ſpirit, *Rom.* 8.9,26. Sonſhip and the ſpirit are knit together, *Gal.*4.6. *Becauſe you are Sonnes, God hath ſent forth the Spirit of his Sonne into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.* It belongs to the Father both to beget, and cheriſh a ſonlike ſpirit in his ſon: God hath undertaken for his, as well that they ſhall be ſons and daughters, as to be a Father to them, 2 *Cor.*6.18. He will beget in them, and poure out upon them ſuch a ſonlike ſpirit, that neither he, nor they, ſhall be aſhamed of the relation.

3. *A ſonlike inheritance*: Such an one as becomes ſuch an heir; what God now poſſeſſes, he muſt inherit; if he be his ſon, his heir, it is his priviledge; what power, wiſdome, goodneſſe, glory, &c. God now enjoyes, he muſt have when he is grown up to it, *Rom.* 8. 17.

This all that receive Christ, must have from and with Christ; all this God hath given unto Christ, and he giveth it all with himselfe, so that take him and take all.

Quest. But what is this same receiving of Christ? who are those persons that receive him? how may we know them?

Answ. The next words tell you, It is *them that believe on his Name?* The name of Christ is his power to save, to bring men out of their misery and wretchednesse unto this. This light comes to lighten men out of their darknesse into it selfe; and who ever lay hold on him he fetcheth them out; who ever is fastened unto him, cannot abide in darknesse, but must come out with him: Now to believe on his name, is to fasten on this power of his; faith is that glue which makes the soule in whom it is, stick and cleave to Christ; and any such soules he fetcheth them out of the clutches of the Devill presently, and from amiddest that power of darknesse under which they lay, and giveth them this priviledge to become sons of God, *Act.* 26. 18.

Quest. But how may we know those who believe? or how come these persons to believe and receive him before others? his own they receive him not; how comes it about that these receive him?

Answ. That is resolved in the following verse, (*vers.* 13.) they have a new principle of life put into them, which inclines them so to doe, *Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* These persons come to it by a new birth, they come not to faith by the powers of nature, but they are new born before they believe: They have a new seed of a new life put into them, out of which faith growes, and from which it fetcheth its ability to act. Now concerning this birth, that we may not be deceived about it, he shewes first what it is not, whence it doth not proceed; and then what it is, whence it doth proceed: It is not a birth of *blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

1. *Not of blood:* *Blood* may import that instruction in Religion and disposion towards Religion, which a man receiveth from his Parents; There is a veine of Religon runnes along with the blood, and there is a kind of natutall inclination in all persons.

perſons towards Religion, both which meeting together with ſome addition of inſtruction, will carry a perſon very farre in Religious practiſes. This was the Religion of the Iewes generally; what they drank in from their parents, and were accuſtomed to by their education, that they were very ſtrict in the obſervation of. And this is the root of moſt of the Religion, at this day in the Word; Turkes, Papiſts, yea, Proteſtants generally ſuck in their Religion with their blood; indeed, they all pretend to a power of God, and ſtrive to make up a kind of ſatisfaction to themſelves one way or other, whereas the groundwork whereupon they build is rotten. But this is not the true birth; man in the naturall way of generation cannot convey it; *Abraham* did not thus convey it to *Iſaac*, but he was a ſonne by Promiſe; it is not the blood of *Abraham* through which the Faith of *Abraham* runnes.

2. *Nor of the will of the fleſh*: The will of the fleſh being diſtinguiſhed from the will of man, denoteth the corrupt part with the deſires thereof, which alſo doth operate and has a power to produce a birth in Religion though not the true birth. This will of the fleſh may work a twofold way; either in ones ſelfe, or in others; and either way may effect a great change in the perſon, in the reference to Religion, though not the true one.

Firſt, There is the will of the fleſh working in a mans ſelfe; when a man for by-ends, as vaine-glory, profit, quietneſſe ſake, or any ſuch like thing, taketh up the profeſſion and practice of Religion; this is from the fleſh, from a corrupt principle; when a man takes up Religion, not from a pure conviction of conſcience, not for Religions ſake, but becauſe it ſuites with ſuch and ſuch by-ends of his, tends to advantage him in this or that reſpect. Thus the Phariſees took up moſt of their practiſes, out of a deſire of honour and gaine; and it hath beene obſerved, and known of many in former times, that they have been Puritanes on ſuch termes as theſe, to obtaine a wife, to pleaſe their friends, to encreaſe their cuſtome and the like; And thus are many things maintained among us at this day, which the light that is abroad would quickly and clearly

dispell, only corrupt ends keep them alive. And thus a man may be born anew as it were, a great change may be made in him, and he appeare a new man to all that behold him; when as it is indeed but the working of the flesh, his prosecuting some corrupt ends of his own which maketh him thus forward and zealous in Religion.

Secondly, There is this corrupt part, or *will of the flesh*, not only working in a mans selfe but in others also; and that is, when other men for corrupt ends of their own, strive to bring on persons (specially such as may be more easily led) to such and such practises in Religion, and to zeale in such and such particular things: Thus the Pharisees did bring the people into many practises, for their own corrupt ends; and thus were the poore Proselytes born, they were brought into a way of Religion by the Iewes, who took great paines to effect it, but made them *ten times more the children of hell then they were before*: And this we shall see, will be the case of many poore soules at last, who have followed such guides as have had glorious pretences in view, but corrupt ends in their hearts; they become ten times worse at present, and will be ten times more miserable at last then if they had never known such and such wayes of Religion, or had not been so zealous in them. But this is not the true birth neither whence true Faith doth flow; all the changes that are made in us, from any corrupt end or desire of our own, or of any others whatsoever, will bee of little valew to us.

3. *Nor of the will of man*: The will of man being distinguished from the will of the flesh, notes the purest and most ingenuous part; and that either in a mans selfe or any other; It notes, that desire that is naturally in man, to finde out God and his will, and to worship and please him, and so to use the best meanes the soule can meet with in reference thereunto, as seeking into his word, hearing, conferring, praying, and observing what it findes to be his will; This indeed is noble, ingenuous, and acceptable in the sight of God in its kind and degree; but yet it doth not rise so high as this birth that is here spoken of: All this prosecuted by the soule, yet will never bring

bring it to God, though God doth ordinarily (if not alwayes) bring ſuch perſons to himſelfe, whom he thus ſeriouſly and conſtantly inclines.

Nor will this deſire in others, with all the meanes they can uſe accompliſh it; though they themſelves be new born, yet this will not beget another; though the moſt pretious Saint that is, ſhould never ſo earneſtly deſire the begetting of a ſoule to God, out of the pureſt ends that might be, and ſhould uſe all ſpirituall means towards it, pray hard to God, diligently ſpread the knowledge of Chriſt before the perſon and begge on him day after day with teares, to pitty his poore periſhing ſoule, yet all this will not doe; *Abraham* did as much for *Iſhmael* as could be done, if the will of man would have done it; he was carefull to inſtruct his whole Family, but in a ſpeciall manner very faine would he have had grace breathed into him, *Oh that Iſhmael might live before thee!* How faine would *Iſaac* have had the bleſſing runne to *Eſau!* how much did Chriſt doe for the Iewes, how large were his affections; *Oh that thou hadſt known at leaſt in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace!* how vaſte his paines! *All the day long have I ſtretched out my hands to a fooliſh and gain-ſaying people.* So *Paul* for the Iewes, *Rom.* 9. 2, 3. The Apoſtles of Chriſt though they did travell with men, yet they could not beget or bring forth whom they would; and thoſe perſons that were born of this will of theirs, yet that birth came to nothing, they fell away from the Faith afterwards, both from Chriſt while he was alive, (as this book abundantly teſtifies) and from the Churches after his aſcention. So that here are the three great engines of Religion, which turn all the world upſide downe, and make almoſt all the changes in Religion among men, *Tradition*, *Corruption*, *Reaſon* and *Ingennity*, they are all here diſcarded, as not being able to convey the true birth whence true Faith proceeds.

Then at laſt, the Evangeliſt having ſhewn whence it did not proceed, ſheweth alſo whence it did proceed, both the birth and the faith; *but of God*, the birth comes from God, the faith from

from the birth or from the new-born child: God by his Spirit, breathes a breath of life into him, puts a new principle within him, and by vertue of this he comes to believe on Christ: God by the power of his Grace, changeth him and maketh him a new creature, and then he comes to put forth this new act of true and spirituall Faith: God soweth a seed in him, causeth this seed to grow and at length bringeth it forth, so that the child is born; and then Faith naturally, after the law and manner of the Divine nature sprouts from it: The first act of the living child, is to exercise the power of Faith, which before lay hid in him. And this is done, this birth is brought about, not from a mans own will, whether corrupt or ingenuous, nor from the will of any else, but from God, from his will, *of his own will begat he us*, *Iam.* 1.18. This, and this alone is the true birth.

For a close to these two verses, take notice of these foure great truths, wherein much of the Gospel doth lie; three of them are contained in these two verses, the first of them in the fore-going part of the Chapter.

1. That Christ is the light come into the world to lighten men out of their darkneſse; there is no getting out of spirituall darkneſse, but by Christ the true and only spirituall light.

2. The persons for whom he doth this, must believe, must receive him by faith for their light.

3. Faith proceeds from the new birth, a man must be new born that he may believe.

4. The great priviledge Christ bestowes on those that believe, which is this, he gives them Authority to become the sonnes of God.

Those that will be the sonnes of God, must believe on his Christ.

Those that will believe on Gods Christ, must be born of God.

Those that are born of God, cannot but believe on Christ, and Christ cannot but lighten them out of their darkneſse, for that end he came.

IOHN 3.

Verſ. 1. *There was a man of the Phariſees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Iewes:*

2. *The ſame came to Ieſus by night, and ſaid unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can doe theſe miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him.*

3. *Ieſus anſwered, and ſaid unto him, Verily, verily I ſay thee: except a man be borne againe, he cannot ſee the Kingdome of God.*

4. *Nicodemus ſaith unto him, How can a man be born when hee is old? can he enter the ſecond time into his mothers womb, and be borne?*

5. *Ieſus anſwered, Verily, verily I ſay unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdome of God.*

6. *That which is borne of the fleſh, is fleſh; and that which is borne of the ſpirit is ſpirit.*

Here is an excellent Diſpute betweene Chriſt and *Nicodemus* concerning true Faith; *Iohn* had deſcribed it before in the twelf and thirteenth verſes of the firſt Chapter, where hee had ſhewed that thoſe that did indeed believe, were born of God: This act of Faith in them, which did entitle them unto Chriſt, and whereupon they did receive the right of Sonſhip in and from him, did not proceed from any light ſet before them by men; nor from any inclination of heart which man could work in them, but from a new principle of life breathed into their ſoules by God.

Here the caſe is more fully argued betweene Chriſt and *Nicodemus*. *Nicodemus* a Phariſee, and Ruler of the Iewes,

Iewes, comes to Christ by night, acknowledging him to be a Teacher from God, one who had the will of God revealed unto him by God himselfe, and came to make it known unto the sonnes of men: Hee giveth Christ the ground which induced him thus to believe, which was, because of the signes hee shewed, the wonders hee did, which no man could doe unlesse God were with him. Those things he did were beyond the working of any humane power, therefore God must needs be with that person who doth them; he comes as one that would be a disciple (though hee comes not so openly as others did) and at his first salute, hee acknowledgeth Christ to be a Teacher sent from Heaven by God, rendring his reason withall, whereby hee could not chuse but so judge, which was no meane one neither, but drawn from the mighty things Christ did, wherein the very power of God did appear to the eye of reason evidencing unto it that *living Spring* from whence he came, and the *Presence* of that *living Spring* with him: This is expressed in the first and second verses.

In the third verse, Christ applyeth himselfe to his particular state, wishing him to consider the ground whence this acknowledgement of his did arise; telling him plainly, that *true Faith* must arise from another root then sight of his miracles; *Iesus answered, and said unto him, verily, verily, &c.* as if hee had said, Mark what I say, I know what I speak, *Verily, verily*, it is most certainly so, *unlesse a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdome of God.*

What is the Kingdome of God? *The kingdome of God*, is that state of life and blessednesse, which God hath brought to light by Iesus Christ. As the kingdome of the Devill is that state of death and misery man lies in by nature; so the Kingdome of God is that state of life and glory man is advanced to by grace: *Philip preached the things concerning the Kingdome of God, and the Name of Iesus Christ*, Act. 8. 12. He opened the life and blessednesse that belongeth this Kingdome, and the name of Christ who is to bring us into it.

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To ſee this Kingdome, is an act of Faith, which is the eye wherewith wee behold every ſpirituall thing; this eye no man hath, but he that is born againe, he that is born from above: This eye doth not lie hid in nature, and ſo only wants ſomewhat to cleare it, and draw forth the act of it; but it belongs to a new birth; he that is begotten and born of God, hee hath this eye in him, and none elſe: Therefore *Nicodemus* conſider thy miſtake, Thou thinkeſt becauſe thou ſeeſt by an eye of reaſon that I am come from God, and art drawne by thy reaſon and ingenuity to acknowledge and owne it, that therefore thou believeſt: No, no, *Nicodemus*, if thou haſt Faith, it ariſeth from another ground then the ſight of my miracles, it comes from a new birth in thee, though God may make this uſefull to thee alſo to help thee to believe; but if thy Faith have no better ground-work then this, it is like the fore-mentioned Faith of thoſe in the former Chapter, verſ. 23. whom I dare not, I cannot owne as Diſciples. Oh weigh and conſider this, all wiſe and ingenuous men, behold your ſnare, and take notice of this alſo, which may help to enervate the force of it.

That ſight and acknowledgement of any ſpirituall thing which wee are drawn to by a power of reaſon, by ſuch evidences as reaſon it ſelfe cannot withſtand (as miracles were) wee have juſt cauſe to ſuſpect as not true and ſpirituall: It is the ſight of reaſon not of Faith; it is ſuch an act of Faith as proceeds from the naturall man, not from the ſpirituall man; it is that act the eye that was in us before puts forth, not the new eye. Oh ſee, how men are quite out in ſeeking after the truths of God in every kind: They call for reaſon, for evidences to have it brought by ſuch hands as no man could juſtly refuſe: Ah! they ſhould call for new eyes, or leaſt for God diſcovering his truths in a ſpirituall way to their eyes which all the miracles in the world cannot doe: They may by miracles bee brought to a rationall ſight, and ſo to a preſent acknowledgement of truths; but never to a ſpi-

rituall ſight, which alone is ſatisfactory, and which alone will be laſting.

Verſe 4. *Nicodemus* apprehends this ſpirituall truth very carnally and groſſely, of a fleſhly birth of the fleſhly part; and it ſeemeth a direct abſurdity to him, what Chriſt had now affirmed: He thinks he hath caught the great Maſter (whom hee acknowledged juſt now a Teacher come from God) in a trap, and hee ſo expreſſeth it, as if Chriſt had overſhot himſelf, and could not tell how to make good what hee had laid downe; *How can a man be borne againe when hee is old?* is there any poſſibility of this? *can hee enter the ſecond time into his mothers wombe and bee borne?*

Verſe 5. Chriſt doth not abate any thing of what hee hath ſaid, but affirmeth it againe with the ſame vehemency, further opening, and confirming it, *Ieſus anſwerd, Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, Except a man be borne of water and of the Spirit, hee cannot enter into the Kingdome of God.*

Doeſt thou come to be a Diſciple to learn the way to happineſſe? wouldſt thou enter into that ſtate of bleſſednеſſe, that I come to preach? thou muſt be born againe; and not carnally, nor of carnall things; but *of water and of the ſpirit.*

For the better apprehending of this, let us enquire a little into theſe enſuing particulars.

1. *What is meant by water?*
2. *What it is to be borne of water?*
3. *What it is to be borne of the Spirit?*
4. *What this entring into the Kingdome of God is, which none none can doe, but that perſon which is born of water and of the Spirit?*

1. *What is meant by water?* By *water* is meant, the knowledge of God in Chriſt, the ſight of God in the face of Chriſt, wherein eternall life conſiſts. *If thou hadſt known the gift of God, &c. thou wouldeſt have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water, Ioh. 4. 10.* What is this living water? Why, *this is life eternall, to know thee the*

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onely true God, and Ieſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent? Ioh. 17. 3. The heavenly doctrine of life and ſalvation, is often expreſſed in Scripture, by this tearm of water, *My doctrine ſhall drop as the raine, my ſpeech ſhall diſtill as the dew*, *Deut.* 32. 2. & *Iſ.* 55. 10. *Heb.* 6. 7. As God is the fountaine whence all the life and ſweetneſſe of the creature flowes, whether naturall (*Iſ.* 65. 9.) or ſpirituall (*Ier.* 2. 13.) So thoſe beames of eternall light, thoſe ſtreamings forth of life, which iſſue out from God in the knowledge of Ieſus Chriſt, they are waters from this fountaine.

2. *What it is to be born of water?* It notes that fundamentall and radicall change which is made in the heart by the power of the truths of Chriſt conveyed thither, and working there.

There are three great effects of this water.

It begets, it waſheth, it nouriſheth; It begets a dead man to life, it begets a man unto God; for it is a living and active water; or rather it is the ſeed whereof a man is begotten and born; or at leaſt the veſſel, that living veſſel which containes it: It is that alſo wherewith he is waſhed after hee is born (though there be a waſhing with blood too.) And it nouriſheth him after hee is both borne and waſhed, hee lives upon the very ſame water that he was borne of and with: It is the firſt of theſe effects that is here ſpoken of, that ſtroke that water hath in the generation and birth of the new creature, *He is born of it.* It is by letting in theſe waters upon the ſoule and into the ſoule that God changeth it, and maketh it anew. Our change in our ſpirits, and our converſion to God proceedeth from, and is to be attributed to that power of truth that God lets in upon us; and to that the Apoſtle aſcribeth it (as in many other places) *Rom.* 6. 17. *Iam.* 1. 18. As our firſt change from God, was by drinking of the Devils waters, which were waters of darkneſſe and death, waters of errour and deceit; ſo this great change to God againe, is wrought by drinking of Gods waters, his ſpirituall waters of life, which are his truths which hee holds out unto us, wherein there is no darkneſſe nor

deceit at all, but they are cleare, living, and substantiall.

3. *What is it to be born of the Spirit?* It is to have this change from these waters wrought in us by the spirit. A man can never change his own heart, by any of the truths of God; but it must be the spirit that must doe it. This water is too spirituall a seed for any man to sow in his own heart: No man, no creature can sow anothers seed; this is the spirits seed, and hee must sow it if it be sown: Christ himselfe openeth and illustrateth this further in the eigth verse of the third Chapter, *The winde bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it commeth, nor whither it goeth: So is every one that is borne of the Spirit.* The Spirit breathes his own breath, blowes his own blast, makes his own sound of life himselfe in our spirits, and thus are wee born of him. It is not all the changes a man can make by the light of naturall truths, nay by the light of spirituall truths, working them upon his heart with never so much paines, that will amount to a new birth; but it must be the spirit of Christ breathing this seed into him, and forming him into a new creature by this seed. As it is water or the word of truth, whereby we are begotten; So it is God alone who begets, and that hee doth of his own inclination too, *Iam.* 1.18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.*

4. *What is it to enter into the Kingdome of God? The Kingdome of God,* is his spirituall dominion in Christ, to which every spirituall thing belongs, and in which all spirituall excellencies and blessednesses are laid up: *To enter into this Kingdome,* is by a spirituall act of the soule to come within the verge and bounds of it, even that very act which *Nicodemus* was speaking of, vers. 2. namely, an act of true faith; by laying hold on Iesus Christ and becomming one with him, a man presently hath right unto, and entrance into this Kingdome.

Now saith Christ, it is impossible for any man to doe this who is not first new borne; hee can never truly mount upward,

upward, whose earthly nature is not first changed.

A man may talk of spirituall glories and his right unto them, but of a truth he is not entred into the Kingdome, nor cannot by true Faith, who is not born againe, and that both of water and the spirit. To partake of the priviledges of Christ, to have life and blessednesse from him, requires a birth of water, and of the spirit: There must a new birth of water and the spirit precede there, without which the person is not in a capacity of it; he must bee made up againe of water, and that not of his own forming neither, but of the spirits forming; and then by Faith he enters into the Kingdome, and becomes entituled to all the priviledges of the Kingdome, which without this birth foregoing cannot be done.

Vers. 6. In this verse, Christ layeth down a position, to confirme the truth he had spoken in the former verse: There is a necessity of being born of water and the spirit, or else a man cannot enter into the Kingdome; for that is a spirituall act, and a man can act no higher then hee is, and hee is not spirituall, he is but flesh, if hee be borne but of flesh, *That which is borne of flesh is flesh.*

Flesh here is not to be taken in its latitude, but for that part of it which is powerfull in spirituall generation and production; for that power of man, together with the meanes and engines that hee can come by (whether naturall or spirituall) whereby he works a change in his own heart or upon others, in imitation of that change which God alone doth, and can work, by his Spirit: Nature, Reason, Art, with all the advantages they can possibly desire or have; Nature enlightened and purified by reason and art; Nature furnished as much as may bee with the knowledge of God, with desires to be like God, to recover his image, to obey him &c. This is here meant by flesh, and doth more directly thus reach the state of *Nicodemus*, to whom Christ spake (whose present conviction was wrought by Christs Miracles meeting with his reason and ingenuity),

genuity) then if it were underſtood in a more groſſe ence.

To bee *borne of the fleſh*, denotes the greateſt change that poſſibly can be made in a man by this power with all the meanes that it can uſe: The change is ſo great, that a man is new born, becomes a new man, is changed inſide and outſide, both to his own appearance, and in the thoughts of others. It is an imitation of that work whereby God brings a man forth a new man. The fleſh will take his tooles, ſet about his work and ſeem to produce the ſame effect, bring forth *the New Birth*; but, in truth and ſubſtance, it fals ſhort of it, for it is but fleſh: This birth, when a man hath done all he can, uſed all the ſpirituall meanes hee can, yet is is but fleſh. The fruit can have no more vertue or ſtrength and ſpirituality then the root had from whence it did proceed, which was but fleſh; and though there were never ſo many ſpirituall engines in the hand of fleſh, yet this will not alter the caſe; for thoſe engines cannot work of themſelves, and the fleſh cannot make them work ſpiritually: So that all the births produced by man, are but fleſhly, all the changes man can make in his own heart, or any elſe, is but from fleſh to fleſh, from groſſer fleſh to fleſh ſomewhat more refined. Converſion by Miracles and ſtrong arguments, is but a fleſhly converſion; all the wayes that man can take to bring his owne heart to believe, to cloſe in with Chriſt, to love Chriſt, can produce but a fleſhly Faith, a fleſhly love; all the wayes man can take to kill and ſubdue ſinne in him, it is but a fleſhly mortifying of ſinne; ſinne is truly alive for all this, and will diſcover its life again, when it ſees its time. Chriſt doth eſpecially allude to the Miracles that were in *Nicodemus* his eye; wer't thou born of theſe? thy birth is but fleſhly; how ſpirituall ſoever ſuch a perſon may ſeeme, how ſpiritually ſoever he may ſeem to act, yet at the root he is but fleſhly; The change is made but by fleſh, and the thing changed is ſtill but fleſh, how glorious ſoever the change may ſeeme. Think well of it, it cannot be ſaid too often; all the wayes and meanes man

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can use, to bring up his heart to God, they are but fleshly, and can produce but fleshly operations in him; all this Faith and holinesse, though raised to never so great an height, it is but that his heart must bee mortified to, if ever he live spiritually.

Oh! it would be sweet and profitable to consider the abundance of fleshly changes, wherewith the Devill cozens men: They see a reall change in themselves, and so think they are sure; whereas it is but a reall fleshly change, not a reall spirituall change, and so indeed not reall in the true sence; a change from naturall unbeliefe to naturall Faith, (for there is a power in nature to believe, which may either bee affrighted or perswaded to put forth it selfe, for its own preservation. (Nature being convinced of its present danger, and that there is no way of safety, but by believing on Christ, which Faith must bee accompanied with love to Christ, the truths of Christ, the people of Christ; and that this love must shew it selfe in obedience: Nature I say, being convinced of this, does presently muster up all its forces of Faith, love, obedience, laying them at Christs feet to dispose of; it will trust him, love what he will have it love, obey what he will command it, hate what he will have it hate, deny it selfe, its own ends, interests &c. there is nothing so spirituall, but it will undertake and goe thorough after its manner rather then perish: and alas! what is this? All this is but nature working from its own principle, with its own power, to its own end. There is no new birth necessary to all this, though all this doth also proceed from a new birth (where it is) after more a excellent manner then nature can attaine to.

But now, *that which is borne (or begotten) of the Spirit is Spirit*; that which the spirit begets, which the spirit produceth is spirit: That Faith, that love to God which hee breathes into a man, that is truly spirituall. If a mans heart bee changed, not by reason, not by the power of Miracles, but by him, by his immediate power, then the

change is true and ſound: As it is the ſpirit who begets, ſo that which is begotten by him, with that water which he uſeth in his act of generation, is a true and ſpirituall birth.

There are three particulars which diſcover the reality of ſpirituall things, as well as of other things.

1 The originall from whence they come, 2 the nature whereof they are, and 3 the effects which they produce. Every ſpirituall thing it commeth from the ſpirit, it is ſpirituall it ſelfe, and it worketh ſpiritually, there is a true tincture of its nature, and of its originall in every effect it produceth: As every naturall man is begotten by a man, hath the nature of a man in himſelfe, and acteth like a man, worketh the operations of a man: So every new man, every ſpirituall man is begotten by the ſpirit, hath the nature of the ſpirit in him, and diſcovereth his nature and originall, in every one of his ſpirituall motions and actions. His Faith, his love, every thing in him proceeds from the ſpirit, partakes of the nature of the ſpirit, moveth and acteth ſpiritually.

The former of theſe, Chriſt argues the truth of the new birth from, in this place, its comming from the ſpirit, *that which is born of the ſpirit is ſpirit.* What ever the ſpirit worketh in a man, is truly ſpirituall; that light he ſhews, is true ſpirituall light; that grace he gives, is true ſpirituall grace; that change hee makes, is a true ſpirituall change: but all other changes are but counterfets of that true ſpirituall one, which he alone can make.

And this may ſhew us the reaſon why there are ſo many changes in this flitting age; it is becauſe moſt men are changed by the fleſh, the greateſt power of fleſh ſtill changeth them: A ſtrong Objection which they cannot anſwer, will ſtartle any man that is changed by a power of fleſh. Hence men take up one practiſe to day, another to morrow; now acknowledge this or that for a truth, by and by it is falſe, then true againe; why? becauſe they ſee not things by the light of the ſpirit which never varies, but by

by a force of argument, by a power of reason which sometimes appeares stronger, sometimes weaker, sometimes greater, sometimes lesser; but a soule whose light is changed, whose practises are changed by the spirit, that change remaineth good, let all the winds and gusts of arguments blow never so strongly.

Take heed therefore of changing your apprehensions or practises about any thing, till you can say the spirit changeth them, else it will be but a fleshly change.

What further remaines, but that every one that loveth his soule should lay this to heart, and consider thoroughly according to the weightinesse and importance of it, how it is with him? what that religion is, whereupon he groundeth his hopes, what oyl feeds his lamp, whence his Faith, his love came, and of what rank and kind they are. And not to doe this slightly, or determine suddenly (as is most usuall with men in matters of Religion;) but, as on the one hand, to be thankfull unto God for, and make much of the least hope (which is not every ones lot;) so on the other hand, not to rest satisfied or let God alone, till he hath brought us to an absolute certainty; then and not till then we may safely without hazard give over the debate of this question. And though we may perhaps be a long while before we attaine it, yet if God carry on our hearts in the pursuite, we may meet with sweet pledges and refreshings in the way, as may much mitigate Gods seeming tediousnesse in deferring our full satisfaction herein. And indeed, though God leads his people in such harsh and difficult wayes to the eye of sence and reason, as would affright any carnall heart; yet he hath withall such sweetnings to mingle with them, as maketh them very passable to all whom he leads through them: *Egypt*, the bondage of it he can make tolerable; The Wilderneſſe, the intricacies of it he can make a plaine way through; *Canaan*, the high Wals and strong enemies thereof, even the children of *Anack*, whose very sight strikes terrour, he can make conquerable to his Christ and to his seed.

Onely take heed of ſuddenneſſe, of ſudden judgement. Men that are apt to be ſudden, are as liable to deceit, and commonly are deceived, eſpecially in abſtruſe and difficult caſes; he that will give ſentence at firſt daſh, without weighing the matter thoroughly, and the ſeverall circumſtances of it, may eaſily erre in judgment; and an error herein is of no ſmall concernment; there cannot be a worſe and more dangerous miſtake.

There are two ſorts of perſons very prone to be ſudden in the judgement they paſſe on ſpirituall things, and their own eſtate in ſpirituall things.

The weak and dark Chriſtian, who is ready ſtill through his fear which ever accompanies weaknes, & darknes to conclude all againſt himſelfe: and the ſlight and ſuperficiall Chriſtian, who never thoroughly looked into ſpirituall things, nor hath been well verſed in the deceits about them, he is apt to take the likeneſſe and appearance of every thing for the thing it ſelfe; and to conclude all for himſelfe with as great confidence, as the other thruſts all from himſelfe with over-much diffidence.

The former, lay any promiſe before him; he will ſay it belongs not to him: bring him to any tryall, he is preſently caſt: Try his Faith; alas! there is nothing but unbeliefe to be found in him: Try his love, it is but a naturall affection: Try his obedience, it is but forced by the command: Try his uprightneſſe, why, there is nothing more deceitfull then his heart.

The latter, he is in a clean contrary poſture: Mention any promiſe, he can preſently lay hold of it, it belongs to him, and he can ſuck a great deale of ſweetneſſe out of it: Speak of Faith, why he hath it; he knowes that he is undone without Chriſt, and that he is the only way to life, ſuch as believe on him ſhall be ſaved, and him hath he truſted with his ſoul: Tell him this Faith muſt be wrought by God, why he knowes that no man can work it himſelfe, it is the gift of God: Tell him it muſt be a ſpirituall Faith, hee knowes that too, every grace is ſpirituall. Name any thing elſe, ſo ſoone as you have ſpoke it, he hath it; Speak of love, either to God or the

the brethren, his heart will preſently witneſſe to him that he doth love both God and the brethren, and it is a ſincere love, not for any by-ends in one kind or other: Come to obedience, he holds ſound there too; he obeyes the will of God, at leaſt in deſire and endeavour; he performes duties, he ſtrives againſt his corruptions; nay, and hee doth not this in in a legall way, as thinking to be ſaved hereby, hee knowes he muſt be ſaved by Chriſt alone, by Faith in him: and for his heart, though he faile in many things, yet hee bleſſeth God that it is u right, and he knowes God is merciſull to pardon his failings, and accept of his integrity: So that he hath no cauſe to feare or trouble himſelfe about any thing; for he is ſure what ever may befall him here, it will be well at laſt, and ſo he is at reſt.

Now both theſe are commonly miſtaken: The former; for the promiſes many times belong to ſuch a ſoule, though hee cannot apply them; and hee may have true faith, and true love, and true obedience, though he cannot ſee it: The ſeed may bee ſown in him, and grow up in him, though hee know not how, and ſo cannot acknowledge it; and he is not to be blamed for not acknowledging it (for how can he till hee know it?) nor for ſuſpecting it; but only for ſuch a ſudden and poſitive determining of the contrary, which hee hath as little if not leſſe ground for, then for his ſuſpition.

And for the latter, The promiſes doe ſeldome belong to ſuch a perſon: The promiſes doe not ſo eaſily meet with and melt into our ſpirits, as ſuch kind of language implyes; and for his Faith, his love, his obedience, his uprightneſſe, they may be but of the ſtamp of nature; and if they ſhould meet with ſuch tryals and blaſts as God hath generally appointed, and doth uſually prepare for his, they would ſoon diſcover themſelves.

Now marke the danger of each: The former loſeth his peace, his comfort; The latter his ſoule, if hee be deceived; and both by the ſame miſcarriage, their forwardneſſe and ſuddenneſſe in judgement; the one determines for himſelfe, the other againſt himſelfe, upon their own

imagination and apprehension, before they have the thing laid before them, and opened to them, which they should judge; or the light held to them, by which they should judge; The one determines against his Faith, The other for his Faith; and yet neither knowes what Faith is, and they both doe it by their own reason, which is no true light to discern or judge spirituall things by.

It were a more modest and sutable action for either, to bewaile their own ignorance with a sence of their need of understanding and determining this thing, and to pray and wait for light and help from him by whom it is cleerely discerned, and who can make it discernable unto them.

FINIS.

THE

THE Spirituall Practise OF CHRISTIANS IN The Primitive Times:

Wherein
Are contained the sweet goings forth of life in the soule which is enstated in Christ, and in the sweetnesse and clearnesse of the GOSPEL.

HAving laid down the tryall of a Christian in the fore-going Treatise, it may not be amisse to adde somewhat concerning the Practise of a Christian, (as it was cast in upon reading the Epistle to the *Ephesians*) or some part of the Rule whereby their practise was

was squared, which in that Epistle resolves it selfe into these foure streames.

1 To suck in the sweetnesse of the Gospel.

2 To admire God and Christ who have been at the great cost to purchase and prepare this feast of fatnesse and sweetnesse for the soule.

3 To walk worthy of this his his goodnesse: And

4 To stand upon our guard that wee bee not driven from it, from enjoying the sweetnesse of it, from honouring God with it: This is the path whereinto Christians then were led, and wherein they walked.

1. To suck in the sweetnesse of the Gospel, to be ever feeding upon Christ; to be ever delighting in that glorious state, and in those glorious priviledges God hath bestowed upon us in Christ; and this is to bee done two wayes.

I. By considering the mercies and priviledges we have in Christ: As

First, we have redemption, pardon of sinne in him, we are bought from our captivity and misery by his blood, we are washed from our sinfulnesse, from our filthinesse by the same blood, *Eph.*1.17.

Secondly, we are made sonnes and have a sonne-like inheritance; we are made Gods portion, and God is made our portion, vers.5. & 11.

Thirdly, we have all we can desire in this life, we have accesse to God for any thing (Chap.2.18. & Chap.3.12.) who will bee sure to doe every thing for us we need, freely, and to put us upon praying for every thing wee need, and also upon believing and waiting, that we may misse of no mercy his grace hath designed us; God will take care of us as of his own houshold, Chap.2.19. He will be as sure of our growing up, as he is of the foundation he has laid to bottome us upon, vers.20.21.

II. We further suck in, and better relish the sweetnesse of the Gospel by comparing our present state with our former: We were dead, but are alive; We were darknesse but now are light; We were cursed with all spirituall curses

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in *Adam*, but now are blessed with all spirituall blessings in Christ; Wee were without God, without hope, strangers to life and blessednesse; but now wee are in God and full of hope, and every way nigh unto him, and every excellency in him, Chap. 2. 1. 2, 3. & vers. 6. 12. 13. and Chap. 1. 3.

2. To admire that God and that Christ who have done this for us, who have made such a sweet change in our condition.

1 Admire that great love wherewith they loved us, which was working from all eternity to effect that for us, which now they are carrying on amaine, Chap. 2. 4. Chap. 3. 19.

2 Admire that abundant free-grace that has made no spare of any thing for us, but has acted fully according to the strength of love, Chap. 1. 7. Chap. 2. 5. & 7. There were but two precious lives, The life of God, and the life of Christ; and grace hath given us them both: To recover us from death, the life of Christ was given for us; and to keep us in life, the life of God is given to us.

3 Admire that rich mercy wherein all our former sinnes, and every dayes unkindnesses even against Christ and his precious Gospel, and God our Father and the sweet Spirit, are continually buried, Chap. 2. 4.

4 Admire that various, that manifold, that πολυποίκιλος σοφία, (Chap. 3. 10.) which laid all the plot of love, and which worketh us up daily more and more into the heart of God, and nearer and nearer to our happinesse, notwithstanding all the pull-backs in our selves, in the world, in our spirituall enemies, in the varieties of our conditions, which all almost distemper us, that though we are untoward under every thing, and in danger by every thing, yet we lose nothing.

5 Admire the mighty power which hath thus translated us from darknesse to light, which daily preserves us from falling back againe, and is often mightily working in us to

raise us up to further degrees of perfection, Chap. 1.19.20 Chap. 3.20.

3. To walk worthy of this blessed Gospel state (Chap. 4.1.) (wherein God is our Father, and Christ our head; wherein we have so many pretious priviledges at present, and hopes for the future; wherein we professe our selves broken to the world, and to all the powers of nature in our selves too,) to live like men that live upon a new principle, from God, and in God, and to God.

Walking, it notes our whole course, all the service wee are now to perform to Christ, whose we are, and whom alone we are now to serve; in care over our own hearts, in all duties of worship, in our callings, in our converse, in every thing.

This *walking worthy*, principally appeares in our manner of acting towards men, whereof there are three sorts.

1 Our fellow-Christians, 2 the World, and 3 Persons that stand in outward relations to us.

First, Our fellow-Christians, and specially those in Church-Communion with us, for they are those God hath more specially set us to walk with, they are those with whom we are chiefly to worship, and whom we must especiall love, and of whom wee must especiall take care, and watch over.

Now the manner of our acting towards them, must bee:

1. *With all humblenesse and meeknesse* with low thoughts of our selves, and in a meet manner, Chap. 4.2.

2. *With long-suffering, forbearing one another in love*, vers. 2. We must not be apt to apprehend injuries, or seek recompence for injuries, but suffer long, and forbeare one another; and not simply because it is the will of Christ (who hath forborn us much, and forgiven us much) that wee should so doe, but from the love we beare one to another, from a tender brotherly affection, and in a tender brotherly manner.

3. The Apoſtle tells us what ſhould be our great aime and endeavour in our actings one towards another, verſ. 3. To keep up unity, the unity of the ſpirit, to keep it in the bond of peace, *endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; we muſt not keep a ſinfull unity, a carnall unity in the bond of peace; no, the bond of peace muſt bind up no ſuch unity in it, but there muſt be warre with, and oppoſition againſt, all ſuch unity; but *the unity of the ſpirit*, that unity the foundation whereof God hath laid among us, (who hath made us perfectly one in ſpirituals) being all of the ſame body, having all the ſame ſpirit of life running in us, having all the ſame hope to attaine the ſame end, all the ſame Lord to ſerve, all the ſame way of union with him, ſubjection to him, and owning of him, all the ſame God and Father who begate us all, verſ. 4:5, 6. to which might bee added, wee have all alſo the ſame enemies and the ſame dangers.

Now God having laid ſuch a foundation of unity in all our ſpirits, we muſt endeavour to keep up unity ſo farre as it is ſpirituall, and not to rent one from another, in that wherein God hath made us one.

Humbleneſſe, takes away the root of contention, (which is the bane of all ſocieties, quickly eating out both the ſweetneſſe and benefit of them) for that ſtill flowes from pride; pride begets, pride feeds contention; A man that has low thoughts of himſelfe, has little minde to contend; It is height of ſpirit that blowes up the fire of contention.

Meekneſſe, takes away the occaſion of contention, which ariſes much from a rough hatſh manner of expreſſion; a meek ſpirit as it ſeldome takes occaſion of contention, but quietly lets it paſſe, ſo it ſeldomes givet others occaſion to contend with it.

Long-ſuffering and forbearance, puts a ſtop to the breaking forth of contention, when occaſions are given.

But beſides all theſe, there muſt be an endeavour, an induſtry uſed to keep up true and ſpirituall unity.

4. The Apoſtle directs us how to make uſe of our ſeverall

gifts profitably, according to the end for which they were given, which is, not to set up our selves by them, but to perfect this unity, to build up one another in Faith, in knowledge, and that so we may in all things grow up into Christ the head, vers. 7. to 16.

Secondly, The World; towards them we must walke wisely, Chap. 5. 15. First, taking heed of partaking with them in any evill, nay, of countenancing the least evill in them, Chap. 4. 17. Chap. 5. 7. 11. Secondly, redeeming the time from them as much as may be for converse with God. Thirdly, doing as much good as we can to them while we are with them; both which are included in that phrase of redeeming the time, vers. 16.

Thirdly, those in neare relations to us, whether brought home to Christ, or in their naturall condition, we are to observe the strict Lawes of that relation we stand debtours to them in, which wee are not to faile in towards them, bee they superiour or inferiour, how ever they act towards us, Chap. 5. vers. 22. to the end of the Chapter, and Chap. 6. to vers. 10. Our engagement to Christ does not set us free from our relations and duties in any kinde to men, but onely layes a bond on him to furnish us with free spirits, and power to fill up what wee owe in every relation; Christ gives us not freedome from, but freedome unto every thing that is of God.

4. To stand upon our guard, not to be driven from the sweetnesse of the Gospel, nor from acknowledging and admiring God in every step of his love, mercy, wisdome, power and grace; nor from this walking worthy of the Gospel, by any enemy, any temptation, or any thing that befals us in any kind, Chap. 6. 10. 11. but to stand armed against our enemies, who are spiritually mighty, and lay the soreſt temptations and baits in spirituall things, vers. 12. We are to stand armed thus:

1. With an understanding having its light clear about it, and with a will having an holy disposition ready to act in any kind God shall please to call it out unto, vers. 14. To

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have an understanding ready to put forth it selfe, knowing how to carry it selfe; how to obey, how to suffer; how to embrace, how to resist; and a will graciously disposed to either, whensoever God shall call it forth: Our loynes commonly are ungirt, our light is to seek, our grace hangs loose about us, that we are unfit to act for God at all, much more unfit to doe it in the face of that opposition which we are still likely to meet with in every spirituall undertaking: And for want of this piece of armour, we lie open to our spirituall enemies.

2. With an holy resolution to act for Christ, according to that light hee shall give in to the conscience; to meddle with no evill, to omit no duty of any kinde; this is that brest-plate that keeps the heart or conscience pure and safe, vers. 14. when the Devill does not finde us resolved against sinne, or resolved for duties, (bee it how it will with us) hee commonly takes us in his snare.

3. With affections taken with the sweet truths of the Gospel, (as pardon of sinne &c.) and ready to hold out these truths for the Gospel to make out its way into mens hearts, vers. 15. Troubles and afflictions wee meet with within and without, will quickly damp our affections, if they bee not well fenced with these.

4. With Faith over all these, defending even these as well as our selves in other respects by Faith; by Faith interposing the power of Christ between us and every enemy that may come to assault us in these or in any other respects; that may come to ungird us and make us unfit to act, to damp our holy resolution for God, to deaden our affections towards the sweet truths of the Gospel which prepare the way for Christ, or to wound us with any temptation whatsoever; Faith is a true shield, it defends both the person and the rest of his armour, as we know a shield does: the Devill cannot prevaile in any point against a believing soule, vers. 16. Alas! we can doe nothing our selves, doe no good, avoid no evill; all our strength lies in trusting God with our selves in every condition, and with every spi-

rituall advantage and help hee hath given us to manage it as he pleaseth for us.

5. With hope of salvation by grace, both for eternity and from any present distresse in GODS time: Because many seeming miseries may befall the believing soule, contradictions to his Prayers, Desires, Faith, yea, to all the motions of GODS Spirit in him; hee must have an helmet of hope, (vers. 17.) as well as a shield of Faith: And this will keep up his spirit, that hee shall not feare looking up to GOD what ever befals him.

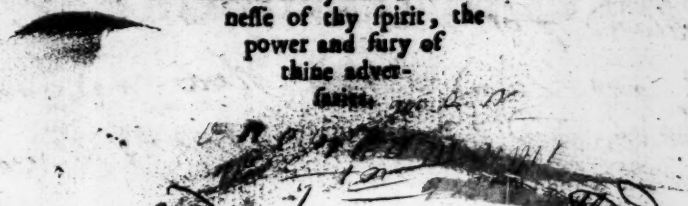
6. With the sword of the Spirit, the Word of GOD, the living Word, the Word which is *Spirit and Life*; This will kill all false reasonings, and every thing that exalts it selfe against CHRIST; this will make enemies flye from the soule (for they hate the Word of life, they know it is their death) and it will also make the soule it selfe subject unto CHRIST, vers. 17.

And all this and every thing else must bee done by Prayer, vers. 18. wee can doe nothing, not gaine this armour, not put it on, not use it; all must be done by Prayer, by intreating another to doe it for us; wee cannot believe, wee must pray for Faith; neither can we pray, we must believe for prayer; we cannot doe either, both must flow from the spirit, and be done in the spirit, praying alwayes with all prayer and supplication in the spirit: Oh, how are we stripped! when every motion sends us out of our selves to another, and yet withall tells us, wee are altogether unable to goe out of our selves, or step the least step towards that other.

And wee must watch unto prayer, catch opportunities to breathe out our hearts to GOD to doe that in us which he bids us doe; not being discouraged with any difficulties, but persevering in our requests for our selves, and all the people of God, vers. 18.

Behold

Behold ô Christian thy spirituall employment, thine easie, and painfull employment, easie to thy spirit, painefull to thy flesh; and as yet, somewhat painfull to thy spirit also, by reason of the cumberance of thy flesh, the weaknesse of thy spirit, the power and fury of thine adversaries.



Young Lad as pray Be not Offended
If I do not Speak to your praise
But take it as I do Intended I
I mean your corrector to raise

praise to my fri

FINIS. Edward Clark